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SUBJECT: NATO ROSE-ROTH SEMINAR ATTRACTS DIVERSE
PARTICIPATION

Classified By: DCM Donald Lu for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: NATO's 68th Rose-Roth Seminar, focused on "Security in the Caspian Region," was held in Baku March 6-8. Speakers included a range of parliamentarians, scholars and government officials from Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia; this was the first time that Central Asian states participated in the seminar. The GOAJ's primary goal in hosting the conference seemed to be raising support for Azerbaijan's position vis-a-vis the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, fully consistent with the GOAJ's broader foreign policy objectives. While the conference provided participants a good overview of some of the issues related to the South Caucasus, the atmospherics were far more interesting, with large and vocal delegations from Serbia and Russia using almost every opportunity to present their anti-NATO talking points. The diverse, often contentious debates also highlighted the challenges in promoting Euro-Atlantic integration throughout the broader Eurasia region. END SUMMARY.

AZERBAIJAN

¶2. (U) Azerbaijan used the Rose-Roth Seminar to highlight its own efforts to promote regional integration, and to advance its perspectives regarding the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Azerbaijani Speaker of Parliament Oqtay Asadov opened the conference with remarks that hailed Azerbaijan's continuing cooperation with NATO and Azerbaijan's contributions to European security, particularly through GOAJ peacekeepers in Afghanistan and Iraq. He noted Azerbaijan's participation in NATO's Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) process and Azerbaijan's ongoing reforms in the security sector, including the transformation of the Azerbaijani armed forces, which he noted included the movement to civilian control of the military. The second half of Asadov's comments focused on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and the resulting security and humanitarian implications. The Ambassador attended the opening session.

¶3. (U) The Azerbaijani MFA's Director of Policy Planning, Tofiq Musayev, lauded the great progress, and "real, practical results" that have taken place in the GUAM organization during Azerbaijan's chairmanship (2007-2008). When pressed to provide details, Musayev responded that Azerbaijan is trying to foster a "dialogue of civilizations" and also is trying to strengthen communication links between the GUAM countries. Azerbaijan's prospects for NATO membership also were discussed during the conference. In a somewhat surprising turn of events, Azerbaijani Member of Parliament - and member of the Security and Defense Commission - Zahid Orujov - asked NATO Special Representative for the South Caucasus Robert Simmons when NATO was planning to offer Azerbaijan membership in the alliance. Simmons noted that Azerbaijan has not decided to ask for membership in the alliance and has not taken the steps necessary to be considered for the alliance.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

¶4. (U) UK-based scholar natol Lieven delivered the keynote address, an interesting, balanced presentation which highlighted the importance of independence for the southern post-Soviet countries. He condemned scholars, analyses of Central Asia and the South Caucasus as a "great game" and "chessboard," arguing that this approach is dangerous because it implies that only the U.S. and Russia are competitors while both China - particularly through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)- and India play important roles in the region. He noted that it was not inconceivable that India could "step outside the U.S. framework" and forge

its own links with Central Asia and Iran. He also stressed the great impact of a potential detente with Iran on energy markets and energy plans.

¶5. (U) Lieven's speech was well-received and prompted a lively debate about NATO's role in the region, narco-trafficking in Afghanistan, the role of the European Union, and future energy prospects and routes. Most of the other speakers presented general overviews about energy, security or country specific issues from a historical

standpoint, and were general in nature. The most interesting and polarizing comments came from the Russian and Serbian delegations.

RUSSIANS

¶6. (C) The Russian delegation was represented by six Duma members, Vladimir Komoedov and Yuly Kvitsinskiy of the Communist Party and Nikolay Kovalev, Khozh Magomed Vakhiyev, Anatoly Korendyasev and Anatoly Starodubets of United Russia. Kovalev did most of the speaking, and he presented various non-sequiturs and historical anecdotes which appeared aimed at embarrassing NATO and specifically NATO's role in Afghanistan. Kovalev reminded the participants that Russia had applied for membership to NATO in 1954, arguing that Russia in the past had tried to embrace NATO. He blasted NATO as an ineffective and weak organization, arguing for example, that 93 percent of global heroin production hails from "NATO-controlled countries." He said that there is, in his view, a positive correlation between NATO's role in Afghanistan and the increased heroin production, implying that NATO was involved in drug running.

SERBIANS

¶7. (C) Bozidar Delic of the Radical Party and Dragan Sormaz of the Democratic Party represented Serbia at the conference. Sormaz's interventions - regardless of the topic - focused on three themes. First, he thanked (on three separate occasions) the Azerbaijani government for its refusal to recognize Kosovo's independence, noting that Serbia would be "forever grateful" for this stance. He said that Serbia views the Georgian separatist regions and Nagorno Karabakh in the same way as Azerbaijan does. He urged all those in attendance who have recognized Kosovo to rescind their decision. He was critical of NATO operations in Qanistan, highlighting an alleged increase in narcotics coming from Afghanistan, and claiming that the main drug traffickers of Afghan heroin were Kosovars. He also was quick to point out that the U.S. had recognized the Kosovo Liberation Army as a terrorist group who had been in cooperation with al-Qa'ida, and noted that various people from the KLA are currently part of or associated with the Kosovo leadership. Finally, Sormaz, playing to the local audience, noted that the destruction of Serbian cultural heritage is akin to the destruction of Azerbaijan's cultural heritage in Nagorno Karabakh. He noted that Serbia was prepared, as the EU said it was, to invest one billion Euros into Kosovo. Sormaz was interrupted each time he spoke by the moderator, noting that needed to stick to the topic. One time he was cut off altogether.

CENTRAL ASIANS

¶8. (C) The open, independent views of Lieven were in sharp contrast to the presentations made by representatives from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The Kazakhstani delegation, which was led by Sat Tokpabayev, during the first opportunity inQich the floor was open for discussion proceeded to read from prepared remarks, which lasted approximately 20 minutes, on the glories of Kazakhstan, the Kazakhstani leadership, foreign policy, energy policy, Kazakhstan's tolerance for all civilizations of the world, and its desire to workQth all partners. The speech was not NATO-related and elicited snickers throughout the conference hall. Similarly, the Uzbekistani scholar Ravshan Alimov, from the "Institute of World Economy" in Uzbekistan presented a similarly sycophantic presentation about the great "development" of Uzbekistan under President Islam Karimov. Nigina Sattorova, the project coordinator of the "Information Education & Cultural Center" in Tajikistan, gave a power point presentation which consisted of tourist-type pictures of Tajikistan, noting the natural beauty of the country.

REGIONAL BICKERING

¶9. (SBU) On occasion, members of the diverse audience were unable resist opportunities to quibble over regional conflicts. Turkish Justice and Development Party member

Mehmet Ceylan reprimanded keynote speaker Lieven for using the word "Kurdistan" to describe areas populated by ethnic Kurds. Lieven ignored him. Similarly, one of the members of the Greek delegation reprimanded another speaker who used the word "Macedonia" when describing the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The Greek representative referred to FYR Macedonia as the "country which Skopje is in;" this suggestion too was ignored.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) While the conference provided participants a good overview of some of the issues related to the South Caucasus, the atmospherics were far more interesting and also highlighted the challenges in promoting Euro-Atlantic integration throughout the broader Eurasia region. Although the participation of Central Asian states in this seminar was a notable first, their representatives' scripted and politically safe remarks were a clear indication of how far these countries remain from embracing brQer NATO goals of democracy and transparency. We note with some concern that the seminar was used effectively by the Serbian and Russian delegations to further their own political interests at the expense of NATO. Their anti-NATO remarks were reported by the large contingent of local media present at the seminar.
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